

**Second Draft Chesterfield Bikeways & Trails Chapter
Narrative Synopsis of Citizen Comments
Compiled from meetings, emails and internet form
September 2015**

The purpose of this document is to summarize all changes and input regarding the draft Bikeways and Trails Chapter since the June 16, 2015 Planning Commission public hearing.

Background

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the proposed Bikeways and Trails Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan on June 16, 2015. A total of 27 people spoke at the public hearing. In addition to support of the chapter, the following concerns were also expressed:

- Costs and funding of proposed network
- Impacts on the environment and wildlife
- Private property rights/use of eminent domain
- Competing uses such as horses, hunting, atv, etc
- Impact on public safety departments
- Impact on new development/zoning
- Lack of notification

Upon hearing these concerns, the Planning Commission deferred the plan for 90 days and directed staff to address these concerns and update the chapter as necessary. At the July 21st Planning Commission work session, the public hearing was further deferred until October 20th. During this period, staff met with concerned individuals and created a second draft of the chapter to address concerns. Major changes found in the second draft include:

- Addition of equestrian users and the need for further study
- Role of the development community
- Discussion on methods of obtaining public access, eminent domain and tax incentives for perpetual easements
- Detailed phasing section for future facilities
- Per mile cost of various facility types
- Alternative funding options
- Discussion on crime prevention and liability
- Discussion on environmental and cultural resource protection
- Guidance for trailhead and parking areas
- Removed redundant implementation steps

- Removed the discussion for the need of a coordinator

Public Comment on Second Draft

The second draft was posted to the internet on September 1st and was open for public comment until September 22nd. On September 15th it was discovered that an error existed on the website resulting in blank comment submissions for the first 16 people that attempted to leave a comment. Staff notified the public and within 24 hours of sending notice, the website received 15 comments. Ultimately, the website received 82 comments between September 16th and September 22nd. Staff also met with several groups and individuals during this period to gather feedback on the second draft.

The nature of comments has become more polarized, with most commenters either supporting or not supporting the concept of the chapter, instead of offering constructive suggestions. Very few comments pertained to any detail of the draft chapter or proposed network which is a change from previous public input efforts. For example, the last public comment period garnered 58 comments regarding specific routing for the proposed network while this comment period received seven comments on routing. This suggests that the comments have reached a level where the chapter itself is not at issue, but whether the county should support or not support improving the safety of walking and biking in general.

There were 52 comments that supported the draft chapter and the proposed network. Some of the comments cited specific reasons for supporting the draft chapter including:

- Increasing the safety for people who walk, bike and drive
- Improving the safety of rural roads in particular
- Health benefits for the public
- Environmental benefits
- Addition of equestrians
- Making connections to public facilities like schools, libraries and parks
- Offering a choice of transportation mode
- Improving property values and being a competitive housing & business market
- Complete streets concepts
- Help improve older neighborhoods
- The safety and comfort of separated facilities
- Increases livability of area
- Linking transportation and recreation
- Could relieve some road congestion
- Tourism benefits

- Provides a vision and framework for future private and public development
- Implements the Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2012

There were 31 comments that did not support the draft chapter or proposed network. Some of the comments cited specific reasons for not supporting the draft chapter including:

- Should not use taxpayer money
- Potential for crime
- People will not use
- Impact on rural lifestyle
- Potential for taking of private property
- Potential for trash
- Should require a fee and/or license for use
- System should only be along roads, not on trails
- There are other priorities for county funding
- It is not safe to mix cars with people who bike or walk
- There should not be a tax increase to support building or maintenance of facilities

There were 27 comments that did not specifically support the draft nor not support the draft, but posed the following points:

- Desire to bring ordinances forward with proposed chapter
- Discussion on proffer policy needed
- Need for additional data, cost and maintenance data
- Should require people who bike to use dedicated facilities and not ride in road if dedicated facility is available
- System should only be along road and not on trails
- Chapter should address the need for education of people who walk, bike and drive
- This chapter needs more time for consideration
- Chapter should address the conflict between hunters and trail users
- What is the liability of a landowner if someone leaves the trail easement?
- The new phases in the plan should be mapped
- Additional incentives should be identified
- Administer a user fee for proposed network
- Require a bicycle license
- Public outreach for this chapter has not been sufficient
- Need for pedestrian actuated signals at intersections
- Eminent domain should not be mentioned in planning document
- Concerns with impacts of providing facilities and environmental regulation

There were six comments that addressed the need to add specific roads and/or routes. These can be viewed on the attached table titled *Synopsis of Citizen Comments Regarding Routing/Staff Response*.

Second Draft Edits

Based on the public input gathered on the second draft, staff does not recommend any changes. You will find two changes to the draft based on agency comments from the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission (page 3) and Chesterfield Transportation Department (page 9).

Summary

In closing, staff continues to listen to the community. However, staff finds that the dialogue has started to shift away from the content of the Bikeways & Trails Chapter, and is more of a general discussion of why/why not in regards to addressing the issue of providing walking and biking facilities in our community. Most concerns center around funding and cost, neither of which are fundamental components of this document. The new chapter is a framework for future efforts, projects and funding – all of which will have their own public processes. The new chapter will provide community expectations regarding a comprehensive network, infrastructure priorities, as well as providing enhanced coordination among several departments.